



Teaching History in Societies Emerging from Conflict

By

Alan McCully, Brendan Hartop & Keith Barton

University of Ulster - UNESCO Centre

The UNESCO Centre

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The UNESCO Centre wishes to thank the Nuffield Foundation for supporting the running costs for the seminar and Euroclio, the World Bank and the Council of Europe for contributing towards the travel and subsistence of several of the participants.

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ISBN 0-9544544-3-X

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Published by the

UNESCO Centre

University of Ulster at Coleraine

August 2003

Report of an International Seminar

Teaching History in Societies Emerging from Conflict

Held in the UNESCO Centre,
University of Ulster, Coleraine, Northern Ireland

September 9 – 13, 2002

Supported by

The Nuffield Foundation, The World Bank,
Euroclio and The British Council

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The Rationale for Holding the Seminar

The initial impetus for the seminar came from a proposal from within the UNESCO Centre at the University of Ulster. It proposed holding a summer school in August 2000-1 for history educators from divided societies - countries affected by communal division and conflict. The idea was that the Northern Irish experience of teaching history through thirty years of the 'Troubles' might be scrutinised as an effective model of practice, responding as it did to a situation characterised by contested national identities, each supported by selective and partisan versions of past events. The underlying premise was that by experiencing the use of an enquiry-based curriculum, like that used in Northern Ireland and throughout Britain, teachers who find themselves contending with the competing—and often conflicting—historical narratives prevalent in divided societies might see the value of moving away from materials and methods of instruction that emphasised the transmission of 'objectively' true accounts of the national past. Instead, they might focus on engaging students in the examination of evidence and the analysis of varied historical interpretations. In effect, this was similar to the rationale behind a seminar held in Northern Ireland in 1997 under the auspices of the Council of Europe entitled *The Teaching of History in a Divided Community* (McCully, 1997). On that occasion thirty-one participants from twenty countries attended. The formal input for the seminar came entirely from Northern Irish presenters with delegates then asked to respond as to the applicability of the initiatives they had seen for their own working context. As regards the UNESCO 2001 event, late withdrawals and other organisational problems led to its postponement. However, the initial enthusiasm for the idea shown by enquiries from overseas convinced the organisers that an international gathering of this nature had potential. They then had time to reconsider their original proposal in preparation for September 2002.

Three factors prompted a re-thinking of the purpose and structure of the seminar. The first concerned the proposed title. It was discovered that the characterisation 'divided societies' had little resonance in other countries. Although it was initially thought the phrase was somewhat extraneous—what society isn't divided in some way—it seemed to evoke a negative response, and it was ultimately changed from 'divided societies'

to, first, 'societies emerging from conflict' (which also implied a greater degree of divisiveness than many were comfortable with), and ultimately, 'societies which have recently emerged from conflict.'

The second cause for re-thinking was a more substantive one. It surrounds the claims of the Northern Irish History Curriculum to be held up as an exemplar for other educational systems seeking to respond to divisions in society through the formal curriculum. The aims and structure of the History programme in Northern Ireland have been documented in detail elsewhere (Phillips et. al., 1999, McCully, 1997) but briefly they are characterised by the following:

- A values base provided by two cross-curricular themes, *Education for Mutual Understanding* and *Cultural Heritage* encouraging greater respect and cultural understanding
- Emphasis on a process that encourages an enquiry approach whereby students have the opportunity to investigate historical issues and to arrive at personal viewpoints provided they are substantiated by historical evidence
- The fostering of a range of concepts and skills to enable young people to view historical events critically
- The consideration of multiple perspectives to historical events, and alternative interpretations of events
- A prescribed content that sets important periods of Irish history in a wider framework of the history of the British Isles and Europe.

Therefore, the considerable achievement of the curriculum is that by adopting the enquiry principles of the 'new' history that emerged in the United Kingdom in the 1970s and 1980s a way has been found to circumvent the necessity to 'tell the national story': a story that, of course, would be highly contested. Instead, from 1990 teachers in a largely segregated system have followed a common programme and pursue common learning outcomes which place an emphasis on applying critical thinking and enquiry to contentious aspects of Irish history.

History teachers in Northern Ireland deserve great credit for the professional way that they have gone about implementing the new curriculum. Evidence

from the Education and Training Inspectorate and other sources suggests that, whatever the setting of the school and background of the practitioner, history teachers, in the vast majority of instances, strive to present the past in a balanced and objective manner to their students. In a divided society this is a considerable achievement and it is legitimate that the model developed should be shared with other educational systems, particularly those wrestling with history curricula that tend to promote one particular, partisan interpretation of the past.

Why then the UNESCO Centre's concerns at using the Northern Irish model? These arise from doubts as to how far the history curriculum in Northern Ireland, as taught, actually succeeds in challenging the myths and partial truths prevalent in the segregated cultural environments in which many students are grounded. And to what extent does it really encourage students to apply learning about the past to their understanding of the situation in the present? These concerns surfaced at the Council of Europe 1997 seminar. There, Carmel Gallagher, then officer for history in the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment in Northern Ireland (CCEA) questioned whether the majority of students are capable of transferring the intellectual skills honed in history to the contentious world outside the classroom without teacher guidance. It was her view that unless young people are encouraged to apply those intellectual skills and processes to their own stereotypes and prejudices they are unlikely to make that 'brave and disturbing intellectual transfer' for themselves. Her challenge as to how far the social responsibility of Northern Irish teachers really stretches touched a raw nerve with several local teachers present. The rapporteur concluded that,

In Northern Ireland and elsewhere, a fundamental tension has yet to be worked out. On the one hand there are those who feel most comfortable with a history programme that emphasises enquiry, evidence, objectivity and the teacher as neutral arbiter. On the other there are those who reject detachment (both in time and methodology) as an illusory quest. They wish to see students' critical skills applied to contemporary issues through their historical studies.

(McCully, 1998 p.14)

Other evidence supports the contention that teachers, generally, in Northern Ireland have been reluctant to engage with more sensitive cultural and political issues (Smith and Robinson, 1996). A more recent empirical study of the relationship between the history curriculum and students' sense of national identity conducted with 253 young people, aged 11 to 14, carried out by two of the organisers of the UNESCO seminar further questions the effectiveness of the curriculum in challenging deeply held opinions (Barton and McCully, 2002). The study found that more students in the third year of secondary school identified with historical events they associated as representing their particular communal identity than did so in years one and two. Yet, in year 3 students are expected to gain understanding of 20th Century Irish history and, by implication, the roots of the most recent phase of the 'Troubles'. Instead, the research found that some students used their school learning selectively to support partisan communal identities. The researchers concluded that not enough was being done to mediate between attitudes acquired through informal learning in the community and the learning of the formal history curriculum. Therefore, in the light of all the above, those organising the UNESCO seminar felt increasingly uncomfortable at holding up the Northern Irish model as the sole exemplar of practice.

The final factor influencing re-thinking of the nature of the seminar arose from the observations of members of the UNESCO Centre when working in other countries emerging from conflict, particularly several in Eastern Europe. Too often foreign 'experts', at seminars or in field projects, have been asked to promote their solutions for achieving greater social cohesion. Frequently, such interventions have been observed to be in isolation from the specific context of the country concerned. They have failed to take account of the nature of the difficulties facing educationalists there and the realities of the resources available. Further, often the funding mechanisms between the international community and home personnel are such that the former see it appropriate to direct the latter toward solutions to the detriment of professional dialogue. Taking all of this into account, then, the organisers of the UNESCO event decided to re-structure the original programme to allow adequate space for each country represented to define their situation, outline the challenges arising from history education in their own countries and identify their

needs as they perceived them. There would be input from a Northern Irish context but this should be open for critique alongside the other contributions. The summative task for the seminar would be to see if it might be possible to distil the diverse experiences of the various countries and to identify which issues related to history education, if any, were relevant to a variety of national settings, and which were unique challenges, presumably requiring unique solutions. From this it might be possible to identify key principles for history teaching appropriate to societies recently emerged from conflict.

The Programme

The aims of the seminar were to:

- 1) Introduce participants to alternative models of history teaching
- 2) Critique the enquiry, evidence-based approach to the teaching of history as an appropriate one for working in divided societies
- 3) Share the particular working contexts of each jurisdiction represented and gain understanding of the opportunities, and limitations, of programmes implemented, and proposed.
- 4) Explore the relationship between history teaching and the potential to develop active citizens in democratic societies
- 5) Draw from the collective experiences a set of principles which, when applied, might allow history teaching to contribute to greater social cohesion in societies emerging from conflict
- 6) Produce a report, under the auspices of the UNESCO Centre at the University of Ulster that records participating jurisdictions' perspectives and explains the Principles referred to in 5.

The programme is included as appendix 2. The intended outcomes were made clear from the outset and the format planned to allow time to reflect on presentations and to identify and refine principles as they emerged during the week. Professor Alan Smith, the holder of the UNESCO Chair in the School of Education at the University of Ulster, provided the contextual address. His talk was included to provide a frame of reference by which to analyse the national contributions. In addition to the presentations of the national groupings there were four inputs on topics deemed

relevant to the theme of the seminar; the role of textbooks (by Professor Wolfgang Höpken of the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, Braunschweig, Germany), historiography (by Professor Keith Jeffery, Department of History and Politics, University of Ulster), discourse through ICT (by Dr Roger Austin, School of Education, University of Ulster) and the role of museums (by Dr Elizabeth Crooke, Academy for Irish Cultural Heritages, University of Ulster). This was supported by a visit to Derry / Londonderry to observe how agencies in the community, including museums, can provide additional resources for formal education. The final day offered a workshop on teaching approaches to promote enquiry and multi-perspectivity followed by group discussion to draw together the learning of the seminar.

It is worth stating that the professional background of the participants influenced the course of the seminar. Previous experience with educational systems in Europe and Asia had suggested that a focus on teachers might be impractical; in that in highly centralised systems, teachers often have little room for experimentation in their instructional practices or use of materials, and thus they are unlikely to serve as change agents. Rather a seminar for policymakers, historians, and teacher educators was envisaged, all of whom, it was thought, would be more capable of impacting on practice in their respective settings. In fact in the final list of participants - from Russia, Latvia, Estonia, Cyprus (two from each side of the island), South Africa, and Sri Lanka – there was a rich mix of committed academics, educationalists, and classroom practitioners; the range probably a product of the diverse sources of funding drawn upon, each with its own priorities, preferences, and selection criteria. In practice, this led to a greater emphasis on digesting national contexts and considering practical approaches to teaching history rather than to developing a synthesis of international concerns.

Education for Social Cohesion

Professor Smith opened by acknowledging that there was no longer a clear line between situations of conflict and non-conflict, given that more low-level conflict exists today between governments and sections of their own society than is defined by declarations of hostilities between recognised states. His presentation was premised on the analysis that education either can be part of the

solution to conflict or can exacerbate or even cause conflict. He argued that the study of the role of education should be an integral part of the analysis of conflict. There is a structural relationship between the two. If conflict is interpreted as a transformative stage then education is also a transforming force and the two interact at all levels and stages. Further, internal conflict can occur in highly educated societies as well as in developing countries, suggesting the nature of the education system can contribute to division.

Education is almost always run by the state and the state is likely to be a party to the conflict. His paper hypothesised that the issue of 'trust' between groups in conflict may be related to the way diversity is managed within the overall education system and its institutions; whether governments perceive education as mainly about 'social control' or about 'empowerment' through social, economic and cultural development. Smith classified education systems and their institutions as:

- **Assimilationist** (single institutions operating according to the values of the dominant tradition, with minority rights and interests neglected)
- **Separatist** (separate institutions each serving different constituencies with relatively homogeneous populations; processes within institutions may or may not acknowledge broader diversity outside the institutions)
- **Integrationist** (common or shared institutions with diversity represented within the population of each institution)

(See Smith and Vaux, 2003 p.27)

He then cited from the work of Kincheloe and Steinberg (1996) to address the dynamics within institutions, detailing how they come to terms with pluralism in practice. Conservative pluralism stresses what people have in common, seeks to create neutral spaces and avoids potential controversy. Liberal pluralism acknowledges differences and celebrates diversity but is unlikely to address the potential causes of conflict. Critical pluralism both recognises similarities and differences between people and also acknowledges unequal power relations between groups and is willing to take action to address social justice. By implication the latter offers the best opportunity

for trust building and the alleviation of conflict. In formulating policy it is vital for governments to acknowledge their obligations under the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. With regard to education, Article 28 affirms the right of every child to primary education provision. But, the quality of that education is also defined. Under Article 29 the aims of education should include 'respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms' and 'the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origins.'

This in turn has implications for the nature of the curriculum. Content orientated syllabuses founded on the transmission of knowledge are unlikely to fulfil this mission. Rather the emphasis should be on a process orientated curriculum promoting learning outcomes embodying key skills and values. This is especially important for the 'national' subjects of art, music, literature, history and geography, which encroach on identity issues of language, culture and religion. History, for example, can be part of the problem where the government defines the 'national story' and manipulates the curriculum and textbooks for political purposes. On the contrary, it might contribute to solutions where its learning outcomes are enquiry determined and the emphasis is placed on multiple perspectives and interpretations. If the latter approach is adopted it must be recognised that there are significant economic implications, particularly for the provision of learning resources and teacher education.

In conclusion, Professor Smith offered the classification framework outlined above as a tool for analysing education systems emerging from conflict but stressed that each situation has unique features and each requires systemic analysis. He also acknowledged that more serious attention needs to be given to evaluating and monitoring the 'efficacy' claimed for preventative education across a range of international contexts.

The National Contributions

In addition to the input from Northern Ireland six case studies were presented – South Africa, Sri Lanka, Cyprus, Latvia, Estonia and Russia. Each national grouping was given ample space to discuss the social, cultural and political context in which its history teaching is set, to describe current policy and curricula and to identify aspects of innovative practice contributing to the alleviation of conflict and the promotion of democratic values. It is not the intention here to describe each contribution in detail nor was it the function of the seminar to carry out an analysis of the causes of ethnic conflict. Rather, cultural and political backgrounds were used as a backdrop to understanding the responses of the respective educational systems.

When exploring situations in individual countries it was, indeed, clear that each had very particular circumstances and the variants present in each, in turn, helped shape what was felt desirable, and what was practical, in terms of educational responses. Geographically, the countries present varied in size from the huge expanses of Russia and South Africa to the small territories of Latvia, Cyprus and Northern Ireland. Obviously, the logistics associated with size greatly influences policy provision. Additionally, countries like Russia and South Africa are multi-ethnic in composition and have to accommodate many cultural aspirations (in the case of Russia up to a hundred) whereas the conflicts in Cyprus and Northern Ireland, respectively, are largely played out by just two cultural groupings. In some cases a majority grouping is numerically dominant as in the Baltic States and Sri Lanka providing particular democratic challenges whereas the opposing communities in Northern Ireland and Cyprus are more evenly balanced. In the Cypriot situation segregation including schooling is almost total. This is a significant factor in Northern Ireland, also, whereas in the ex-Soviet states separation through education is only partial. In all but the Northern Ireland situation the presence of different languages is a potential source of division, though in South Africa, Sri Lanka and Cyprus, in education settings at least, English is fostered as a common, ‘link’ language.

Given the title of the seminar the most transparent

categorisations of countries present were those that had recently suffered violent conflict and those that had not. Four of the case-study areas – South Africa, Sri Lanka, Northern Ireland and, arguably, Cyprus are emerging from conflict as a result of ethnic / national / religious division. Violence, and the resultant trauma, provides particular challenges in dealing with the emotional dimension of student responses and in fostering a climate of reconciliation. In contrast, the post-Soviet transition toward democratic structures in Latvia, Estonia and Russia has been largely peaceful. Initially, participants from those areas had doubts about their credentials to be present at the seminar. Yet, common themes emerged across all countries and by the conclusion the delegates from the ex-Soviet bloc had come to identify with many of the issues raised in those states that had experienced recent violence. This suggests that for educators formulating new approaches to history in the context of building new democratic structures similar challenges arise: but that the legacy of violence intensifies difficulties.

One factor present, to a greater or lesser extent, in each of the countries represented, is an increasing diversity of people. Partly as a consequence of the impact of globalisation even in societies like Northern Ireland and Cyprus, characterised by bipolar conflict, there has been a significant influx of immigrant groups in recent years. In each country examined by the seminar new democratic structures are struggling to give minority groupings equitable representation. Representing minority perspectives within the history curriculum presents special challenges. This report identifies that this is made more complex when the minority is a once dominant group whose power and position has been eroded or usurped by groups seeking ‘liberation’.

In each situation history and history teaching were identified as significant factors in contributing to national consciousness with the capacity both to perpetuate division and, through curriculum reform, foster greater social cohesion. It was clear that all participants took for granted that history education should serve social purposes. That is, no one suggested that the topic was a purely ‘academic’ one, or that the curriculum should be based solely on the concerns of university-based scholars. This stands in contrast to those history educators who reject the suggestion that history should play a role in efforts to promote peace and reconciliation and dismiss such goals as ‘social

engineering' and inappropriate for the educational system. It also stands in contrast to the perspective of some educators in Britain and in North America who argue that the essential purpose of history is to introduce students to disciplinary ways of thinking.

The particular social goals participants thought history should serve and the implications they saw for the teaching of history, varied enormously. All spoke in the language of enquiry and the use of evidence, and all thought that students should be actively involved in learning: no one suggested that history should take the form of transmission-oriented lectures, although they unsurprisingly reported that many of their colleagues back home taught in such ways. Yet, as the presentations continued it became clear that participants attached a wide diversity of meanings to the terms, enquiry and evidence. Participants from some countries hoped to use these methods in order to teach students a single, consensual story of their nation's past, one that all students would accept as part of the national heritage, regardless of their own ethnicity or their status within the country; in some cases, this kind of national history was explicitly meant to counter political claims based on ethnicity. Interestingly, participants were quick to challenge each other—and the seminar organisers—whenever a claim was made that minority viewpoints could be dismissed or incorporated into a single national story: yet, clearly applying this in practice to your own country presents huge challenges especially when the prevailing political hegemony comes under scrutiny.

Other participants—particularly those from both sides of Cyprus—saw history's value as lying not in the promotion of a shared national identity, but in its ability to present a neutral and balanced view of the events of the past. Because history can be used in such highly partisan ways, inspiring emotional and entrenched prejudices, these educators felt that students would benefit most from learning a complete and unbiased account of the past (in Cyprus, particularly the period since 1960). If students learned history in this way, and came to recognise that the historical accounts that support divisive political positions are incomplete or inaccurate, they might be more supportive of efforts at reconciliation.

And finally, some participants saw the full significance of history education's potential to

engage students in developing interpretations from multiple accounts and evidence to enable them to reach their own conclusions, without regard to any single, sanctioned view of the past. Educators from one country, for example, in constructing a sample inquiry project for students, suggested that they interview older people and examine government documents and other published sources in order to answer the question, 'What was life like in the Soviet Union after World War II?' The goal of history for these teachers was to produce students capable of independent and critical thought.

So there was agreement that history should serve the goals of society, but less accord over what those goals should be or how history might be designed to contribute to them. Differences in perception were most stark when sensitive issues within respective national histories were addressed. Even in those societies not wracked by communal violence specific historical events were identified that are seen very differently by respective communities: and that such interpretations are often mutually exclusive. The Soviet 'annexation' of the Baltic States in 1939 emerged as an example. In discussing the handling of contentious history it became clear that the internalisation of enquiry within the history curricula represented varied: also that there was considerable avoidance of difficult issues even within those education systems that might be perceived as having responded strongly to promoting democratic change. The initial resistance to follow an external examination module at aged 16 dealing with the recent phase of the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland was cited as an example. It was recognised that teachers, curriculum developers and policy makers, too, are products of contested societies and unless they embrace the values and process inherent in enquiry-based history proposed change will be no more than aspirational.

In the case of teachers it was recognised that they are invariably part of a larger social context, and they cannot be expected to produce levels of enlightenment or tolerance missing in their society at large. At times, teachers may hold the same limited historical perspectives that have contributed to conflict in the first place: more often, they may fear the community repercussions of addressing controversial issues in the classroom, or be unprepared to deal with the emotional responses such issues can provoke in

students. Most teachers have not been trained to teach history in this way, and even though they may have good intentions, they are unlikely to take such risks without a great deal of support. Under these circumstances, avoidance of controversial topics is the safest course, and most, if not all, participants agreed that such avoidance characterised history teaching in their own countries.

In the context of multiple perspectives and handling controversial issues one less obvious barrier was identified through discussion. This is the particular difficulty arising when addressing sensitive material with once dominant ethnic or cultural groupings whose position has become threatened. This has special significance when the historical material being addressed illustrates past abuses of authority and power. The positions of the Unionist people in Northern Ireland, the Afrikaners in South Africa and Russian emigrants living in ex-Soviet Bloc countries were cited as examples. In Eastern Europe such tensions have often been disguised because overt violence has not been a factor but the Baltic participants acknowledged them as significant. In these situations history practitioners face important challenges: how to confront the realities and implications of such events yet to do so sensitively to avoid burdening, targeting, humiliating and alienating young people from those backgrounds.

Differences also emerged regarding perceptions as to which students should have access to enquiry-based history across ability and age ranges. Despite recognition of the social utility of history teaching there was still a sense from several of the presentations that the demands associated with an enquiry approach to the subject were more appropriate to those young people engaged in academic study. Further, there was an assumption that addressing multiple perspectives, issues related to identity and national events deemed contentious was a pursuit for the later school years. Generally, it was considered appropriate for younger students to continue to learn facts about the nation's past in a relatively straightforward way. Only in the South African and Northern Irish contexts was there a clear sense of progression on such issues through primary and secondary education. It is possible that this lack of attention to the needs and abilities of younger students may present an obstacle to thinking about how history can meet the needs of society.

On one final issue there was also substantial consensus. Participants agreed that the lack of available resources was a significant obstacle to new forms of history teaching. In most of their countries, collections of multiple sources of evidence or conflicting source material were simply not available, nor were texts written from, or including, different perspectives. In fact, one common complaint was that the available history texts were written by university historians or others who had no experience working with students, and thus the books were either poorly written or inappropriate for the developmental level of students. In one country, participants reported that no publisher had been found who was willing to print updated versions of even the most basic history texts for students, much less more complicated materials. Technological resources were also limited. The constraints resource provision had on development was a recurring theme of the seminar re-emerging during the external presentations on textbooks and online computer conferencing.

The External Presentations

The themes were chosen for the external presentations on the grounds that they offered support for those seeking to promote the handling of contentious issues in history. Historiography in Irish History, the theme of Professor Jeffery's talk, was selected because, in the context of Ireland, the work of revisionist historians in challenging the anti-colonialist, pro-nation building version of the country's history, has been deemed a significant pre-requisite for the multi-perspective approach adopted by the school curriculum in the 1990s. His viewpoint was interesting in that he placed less emphasis on the revisionist interpretations themselves and more on the impact that the modelling of healthy historical debate in public has on the image of history as popular discourse. Therefore, discussion at an academic level can translate through the experience of the historical training of students into the adoption of an enquiry approach in the classroom. In the discussion that followed the extent of the influence the academy has on the school curriculum was identified as an important issue, especially in those countries where the 'science' of history was perceived as the pursuit of absolute truth. This presented particular obstacles to educational changes in many of the emerging democracies in Eastern Europe.

Professor Höpken's presentation was of central importance to the seminar. History teaching in the United Kingdom has, to a considerable extent, freed itself from the 'tyranny' of the textbook. Commercial publishers produce books and teachers have the freedom to choose texts they deem appropriate. Often, schools operate using more than one text on a particular topic and in doing so present students with alternative interpretations. Other countries often have not developed such a culture and, in any case, have not the resources to invest in such an approach. The presentation advocated that it was critical that textbooks in societies recently emerged from conflict reflected enquiry, and multiple perspectives. Further, they should be produced by practitioners, and ideally by partnerships representing different perspectives. However, Professor Höpken warned against the naivety of thinking that a well-constructed textbook alone could safeguard against propagandist history and transform practice. Teacher education was also critical as a catalyst for change if textbooks were to be used as resources for critical enquiry.

He identified five pre-conditions as necessary for textbooks to have potential as agents of reconciliation:

- 1) Conflict has to be at an end. Otherwise, in his opinion, there is a stark divergence between the values embedded in the text and the reality of the violence in the streets. Here, he cited an Arab-Israeli project he was engaged with. In such circumstances a multi-perspective approach loses credibility or pupils may accept it as an abstract principle only
- 2) Political elites must show absolute commitment to the multi-perspective approach to textbook writing and must refrain from interference. In Bosnia, for example, Bosniak, Croat and Serb politicians have hindered progress
- 3) Society, in general, has to agree on the underlying principles by adopting a self-reflective attitude to the country's past. This is a huge challenge in a society emerging from conflict where the 'vicious circle' of recrimination is still fresh. The cohesion necessary is often accepted in theory but not in practice
- 4) Even when conditions 1-3 are in place the raw emotions that are the legacy of conflict still pose the question as to

whether school textbooks are the best medium to deal with recent events. It might be argued that since such incidents feature in the media it is important that they are mediated in the comparatively critical arena of the classroom. On the other hand are more extreme acts of genocide negotiable in the classroom? Might their mediation be deemed a violation of victims' grief? In such circumstances it may be important to declare a moratorium on educational practice. In Rwanda, for instance, the teaching of history was suspended for two years after the conflict

- 5) Echoing Alan Smith's reservations regarding the international community's interventions in conflict situations Professor Höpken emphasised the importance of such initiatives being acceptable to the society in which they are being introduced. Too often they are 'top down' in approach and prove out of step with the political situation on the ground. When constitutional questions remain unaddressed, educational aspirations toward creating greater social cohesion are likely to remain unfulfilled.

For most participants Dr Austin's use of computer conferencing as a tool for generating discourse around historical issues was an innovative experience. His reference to 'crossing boundaries' had an obvious literal significance in the context of the seminar but also has echoes of Giroux's vision of the capacity of critical pedagogy to break down structural barriers in society (Giroux, 1996). Work between students in Northern and Southern Ireland was cited as an example of establishing links across geographical, cultural and political space. The possibilities for bringing young people together in an electronic forum appealed both for its capacity to overcome issues of travel and security and also to offer an alternative medium to share views in a potentially less confrontational and emotionally charged environment. The Cypriot representation was especially enthused by its possibilities but the politically motivated lack of direct electronic links between both parts of the island were a significant barrier. As with all the resource issues raised during the week access was a major constraint in most of the educational systems represented. This harked back to the Council of Europe seminar in 1997. Then, one delegate, when commenting on what she had seen

of Northern Ireland history provision, likened herself and many of her colleagues to 'poor children before an expensive shop window. They could look but not buy'. There was evidence in this seminar, also that education provision in the emerging democracies was moving forward but that resourcing was still a major constraint. Those promoting an enquiry-based, multi-perspective approach to teaching the subject must recognise that for it to be effective it requires extensive support.

The field visit to Derry / Londonderry incorporated a presentation by Dr Crooke on the role of museums in societies recently emerged from conflict, followed by a visit to the Tower Museum. Participants also walked the city's 17th Century walls, observed its residential segregation and examined some of its politically motivated wall murals, many of them adopting an historical theme to convey their messages. The day proved of great value to the seminar in that, in a tangible form, it allowed participants to travel along the interface between school history and a divided community. Dr Crooke's talk illustrated that museums in such situations have the potential both to contribute to the abuse of history or to facilitate greater understanding and reconciliation. In the case of the former there is the danger that funding dictates support for the position of the state: or, alternatively, in seeking consensus and popularity, the emphasis is placed on nostalgia and tourism. If museums are to have a role in reconciliation she suggested that the critical question was whether or not the public are prepared for them to be politically engaged with the communities in which they are set. The Tower Museum is one of the few heritage establishments in Northern Ireland that has courageously attempted to deal with the recent conflict: but even here the exhibits, a display case of artefacts and a video, are presented to visitors in a passive and, to an extent, a non-judgemental way. Doubts were expressed as to whether this type of presentation could have a transformative function. The District Six Museum in Cape Town was used as an example of a museum that interacts with the public. There, former residents have helped, physically and symbolically, to recreate a township community bulldozed in the apartheid era. In turn, other visitors have the opportunity to contribute reflections on exhibits which portray past abuses of power. The hope is that such interventions can contribute to healing in society. After Dr Crooke's presentation, as seminar participants walked around the divided city and

took in the murals, they had time to reflect on the challenges facing history teaching in such situations. On each side of the sectarian divide the past is used as a weapon to orientate and bind political identity and to justify partisan, if deeply held, political positions. Visually, the murals play on the emotions by appealing for loyalty and solidarity. As well as developing critical thinking history teaching must engage with this emotional dimension if it is to have an impact on such strong mindsets.

Issues Arising from the Summative Discussion

The final day of the seminar was split into two sessions. The morning was spent exploring how the ideas of multiple perspectives and differing interpretations can actually be addressed in classroom practice. Examples were chosen from an Irish context, including an exercise using cinematic interpretations of the Easter Rising of 1916. The material itself was emotive and challenging and this, together with the pedagogical approach developed around it, did much to ground the previous days' deliberations in the realities of working with young people. Participants from each of the countries present then worked in their national groups to identify similarly contentious historical issues that might benefit from the same type of approach. Feedback from these groups indicated that the purpose and role of history teaching in societies recently emerged from conflict was being seriously explored.

The final discussion session was designed to bring the ideas of the week together, and to distil experiences and identify principles that might form the conclusions of this report. As is often the case in such situations practice is often less tidy than theory. Nonetheless, discussion was wide ranging and analytical and provided considerable raw material. It was left to the authors of the report to categorise it and draw out its implications. Unanimously, there was agreement that history has a significant role in societies emerging from conflict. Points that developed from this fell into two categories: those that illuminated what this role is and those that addressed the structural support necessary to make the intervention of history effective.

It was agreed that defining history teaching's role depends first on articulating its purpose. If it has a part to play in the resolution of conflict it has to be seen as more than 'academic': it has to have social

purpose. Recognising the 'values' dimension is crucial. There is a relationship between historical awareness and cultural identity and history teaching has the potential to influence young people's developing social consciousness. None present wished to over-estimate the influence of formal education in the face of deeply cherished communal positions but at the same time they wanted to have it acknowledged that history teaching can make a contribution to the resolution of larger social and political issues. To do so, the adoption of the enquiry approach is essential, placing an emphasis on multiple perspectives, the interrogation of evidence and differing interpretations. However, to fully perform their role history teachers should also grapple with the more controversial dimensions of their subject rather than avoid them. Perhaps, this was the least comfortable aspect of the learning from the seminar. There was general acceptance during the final session that the cognitive versus affective (the 'rational' v. 'emotional') model to explain the struggle taking place within students as they studied controversial events has validity. It is essential that teachers take this into account and are equipped to handle evidence with empathy and sensitivity in order to help students mediate their way to new understanding and their own interpretations.

The following were identified as possible characteristics for a history curriculum promoting greater social cohesion:

- Reach an agreement across ethnic, cultural and political groups on a set of values for history teaching
- Ensure that the programme acknowledges multiple identities
- Promote national pride in ways that does not exclude minority groups
- Encourage sensitivity and the use of inclusive language
- Address aspects of the past in a way that takes account of power imbalances in relationships between different groups in society
- Define the contribution it makes to the development of active citizenship amongst young people.

Four levels of support were identified as necessary to operate such a curriculum. These are in the areas of institutional and community support, teacher education, general resource provision and provision in the specialist area of technology. With

regard to institutional and community support it was recognised that the view of history envisaged above is, in many countries, not one easily reconciled to the prevailing academic and educational perception of the subject. Teachers could not become agents of change unless there is general acceptance in the system for the social role of history. Otherwise, they are in danger of putting themselves at risk within their own communities. This requires that at all levels of the educational system; politics, community, school and classroom there has to be an understanding of history's role and a willingness to open up to new approaches. This demands that those at all levels of education reflect on their own professional and personal values and how these impinge on their practice. Further, the change in approach is so fundamental that it cannot be implemented without considerable input into teacher education. To operate effectively teachers need to be well informed and prepared to enable them to use methodologies that foster enquiry and debate. Professional and personal exchanges with teachers from other backgrounds, within and beyond national boundaries, may be an important step in building confidence prior to bringing such experiences to students. Such activity requires structural support that, in turn, requires confidence building in communities beyond education.

Confidence is also developed through the availability of appropriate resources of quality. The limitations of textbooks have been documented. Yet, when they are written to support genuine enquiry, and offer multiple perspectives, they have an important legitimising function. Teachers must be encouraged to take ownership of the curriculum. Textbook authors should come from within the teaching profession and this might include co-authorship with colleagues from other cultural groups. Similarly, there is little point in training teachers in the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) if they do not have access to the hardware and software in their schools. Participants at the seminar were excited by the potential of ICT software to promote enquiry, but also noted the potential of ICT to generate motivation and bring about change. The possibilities for dialogue through computer conferencing were also greeted enthusiastically. However, if progress is to be made in these areas in several of the developing countries represented it is essential that international agencies advocating change face up to the limitations of current facilities and act accordingly.

Evaluations and Suggestions for Future Action

Overall, the seminar was well received by participants as indicated by oral and written evaluations. Participants were given the opportunity to reflect on the experience of the week then to post an evaluation using the computer conference and also to pursue issues together through the same medium. It is evident from responses that considerable learning took place during the week, both in a social and professional context. The worth of comparing your own cultural and political circumstances, and its educational responses, to those of others should not be underestimated and is reflected in participant comments:

For me it was important to communicate with people and share different experiences. I didn't know much about the situation in education in Cyprus, Sri Lanka, and South Africa before. It was interesting to compare the situation in different countries with my own experience in Estonia.

The most valuable activities were the reports from each country. We managed to understand that our problem was not unique but addresses a lot of countries.

An opportunity to meet people from 'societies emerging from conflict' (networking opportunity) ... to learn about educational systems and the nature of conflicts in other countries – new interesting approaches to teaching history (including on-line conferencing)

The value of the seminar The focus on questions of value underlying differing (majority / minority) accounts of historical events ... the availability of differing national perspectives ... the specific local context of Northern Ireland, itself offering differing perspectives.

Perhaps, too much time was spent on establishing national contexts and not

enough on discussing the practical implications for history teaching. Certainly, participants, particularly, praised the hands on nature of the computer session and the practical work around controversial issues on the final morning. With hindsight the national inputs might have been more tightly framed around specific questions though, again, the mismatch in the professional backgrounds of those present made it difficult to focus on precise areas of expertise. The seminar was exploratory and speculative. The sense at the end of the week that significant areas of history education had not been fully investigated does not, necessarily, detract from the time spent digesting, reflecting upon and discussing the individual national contexts. Certainly, the sense of joy expressed by the Greek and Turkish Cypriot participants at the opportunity to meet and engage in animated discourse was a source of inspiration for all those present at the seminar.

Potential follow-up activities were discussed. A more practice-based focus is an obvious direction to take with the emphasis on teacher participation. However, it was recognised that, at least in the European sphere several organisations including Euroclio and the Council of Europe were working on this dimension, and that of curriculum development. It was also pointed out that the multi-national nature of the gathering might place constraints on how far the work could address the specific needs of individual countries. That might suggest a future event with fewer countries, given the time available. Alternatively, several participant groups identified areas of weakness within their own systems and advocated that UNESCO Centre expertise might be made available to work, for a concentrated period, with curriculum developers and practitioners in their own country either at home, or in Northern Ireland.

Should the multi-nation approach be tried again then it is essential to determine a distinctive role for the UNESCO Centre beyond that offered by other experienced organisations and agencies. The dearth of empirical research to support the claims

being made for enquiry-based history was noted during the seminar. Promoting systematic evaluation and research approaches to history curricula was suggested as a crucial area requiring attention, and one in which the UNESCO Centre has expertise. Teacher education was identified as another important component for change and, again, the UNESCO Centre, has experience in this area.

Finally, the social interaction between participants from different countries was highly valued despite minor frustrations in relation to social facilities. The seminar was budgeted on very limited resources and the organisers are deeply indebted to the tolerance shown by those taking part. Future participants in seminars can be assured that the plea that 'next time put us in a nice cheap hotel next to a Guinness bar' will not be ignored!

Postscript

The limitations of the seminar have been noted but so have the strengths. Above all it demonstrated the worth of educationalists from countries faced with social and political reconstruction sharing with each other their challenges, difficulties and achievements in the search for more effective approaches. Further, while some of the participant countries are further down the road than others in terms of resource provision in general, and history education development in particular, each jurisdiction represented provided insights for the others. Many of the issues raised in the Council of Europe 1997 seminar were re-visited in Coleraine in September 2002 but there were also new insights gained. While acknowledging the unique circumstances of each of the national situations represented there was enough affinity established between participants to suggest that the study of history teaching in societies recently emerged from conflict is a fruitful area for future research and development.

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Appendix One: Participants

Teaching History in Societies recently emerged from Conflict, UNESCO Centre, University of Ulster at Coleraine, 9 – 13 September 2002

Participants

Heli Aiaots , History teacher and author, Euroclio/Matra projects	Estonia
Mart Kand , History teacher and author, Euroclio projects	Estonia
Sergi Vorobiev , Teacher, Sochi College of Multi-cultural Education	Russia
Olga Varentsova , English Language and Civics teacher, Sochi College	Russia
Eugenia Skuratovich , History teacher, Krasnoyarsk Gymnasium Univers	Russia
Nata Krylova , Sociologist, Moscow Institute for Educational Innovations	Russia
Svetlana Amshannikova , British Council, Moscow	Russia
Ilze Senberga , Teacher, Euroclio project	Latvia
Jelena Smolina , Teacher, Euroclio project	Latvia
Dr G.B. Gunawardana , Director-General, National Institute for Education	Sri Lanka
W.M. Karundasa , Professor of History, Columbo University	Sri Lanka
Maria Symeonidou , History teacher	Cyprus
Dionysis Dionysiou , History teacher, journalist	Cyprus
Ahmet Hidiroglu , University teacher	Cyprus
Dr Mehet Caglar , Lecturer, Eastern Mediterranean University, Famagusta	Cyprus
Dr Keith Barton , Teacher Educator/researcher, University of Cincinnati	USA
Prof Wolfgang Höpken , Director, Georg Eckert Institute	Germany
Alison Kitson , History Educator/researcher, University of Warwick	England
Alan McCully , Teacher Educator/researcher, University of Ulster	Northern Ireland
Brendan Hartop , Assistant Director, UNESCO Centre, University of Ulster	Northern Ireland

Other Contributors from the University of Ulster

Prof Peter Roebuck, Provost, Coleraine campus, University of Ulster

Prof Alan Smith, UNESCO Chair, School of Education.

Dr Roger Austin, Head of the School of Education.

Prof Keith Jeffery, School of History, Philosophy and Politics

Dr Elizabeth Crooke, Academy for Irish Cultural Heritages

Appendix Two: Programme

UNESCO CENTRE, UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

Teaching History in Societies recently emerged from Conflict

Supported by: The Nuffield Foundation, The World Bank, The British Council & Euroclio

9th – 13th September 2002

Sunday, 8 September

2.30 Tour of the North Coast including the Giant's Causeway

7.00 Leave Halls of Residence for meal at Cromore Halt Inn

Monday, 9 September (Court Room)

09.15 Welcome – Professor Peter Roebuck, Provost, University of Ulster at Coleraine

09.30 Intended outcomes for the seminar – Dr Keith Barton, University of Cincinnati

09.45 Building Social Cohesion through Education – Professor Alan Smith, UNESCO Chair, School of Education, University of Ulster

10.45 *Coffee*

11.00 Teaching History in South Africa

12.45 *LUNCH*

13.45 Teaching History in Latvia

15.45 *Coffee*

16.00 Issues arising so far – Dr Keith Barton

17.30 *EVENING MEAL*

18.30 The potential and the limitations of institutionalised international textbook work – Professor Wolfgang Höpken (Georg Eckert Institute)

Tuesday, 10 September

9.15 Historiography and Political Change in Ireland – Professor Keith Jeffery, School of History, Philosophy and Politics, University of Ulster (**B. 139**)

10.15 *Coffee*

10.30 The Potential of ICT in Promoting Historical Discourse – Dr Roger Austin, University of Ulster (**B.137**)

12.45 *LUNCH*

13.45 Teaching History in Russia (**Court Room**)

15.15 *Coffee*

15.30 Teaching History in Estonia

- 17.30 *EVENING MEAL*
- 18.30 Issues arising from the day – Dr Keith Barton

Wednesday, 11 September (Court Room)

- 09.00 Teaching History in Sri Lanka
- 10.45 *Coffee*
- 11.00 Teaching History in Cyprus
- 13.00 *LUNCH*
- 13.3 Free Time / School Visits
- 16.00 Raising Issues
- 17.30 *EVENING MEAL*
- 18.30 Issues arising from the day – Dr Keith Barton

Thursday, 12 September

- 09.00 Bus to Derry/Londonderry
- 10.30 The Role of Museums in Societies Emerging From Conflict – Dr Elizabeth Crooke, Academy for Irish Cultural Heritage, University of Ulster (**MB 033, Magee**)
- 12.00 Resource Provision – Visit to the Nerve Centre
- LUNCH*
- 14.00 Visit to the Tower Museum and City Walls
- 16.30 Visit to Workhouse Museum
- 19.00 *EVENING MEAL* in the White Horse Inn, Campsie.
- 22.00 Return to Coleraine.

Friday, 13 September (Court Room)

- 09.00 Teaching Approaches for Multi-perspectivity – Alan McCully
- 10.00 Plenary Session: Identifying Key Issues
- 11.00 *Coffee*
- 11.30 Small Group Work
- 12.45 *LUNCH*
- 13.45 Small Group Work
- 15.00 *Coffee*
- 15.30 The Structure of the Final Report – Dr Keith Barton - Recommendations
- 18.30 End of Seminar Dinner.

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